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# THE BIBLICAL WORLD

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## EDITORIAL LETTER.

### TO THE READERS :

With the present issue of the BIBLICAL WORLD we begin the publication of a series of "Constructive Studies in the Life of Christ." In itself this is but the carrying on of a policy which we have followed from the beginning of the existence of the BIBLICAL WORLD. Almost every volume has contained a series of Bible studies, sometimes running parallel to the current lessons of the International series, sometimes independent of them. In one respect, however, these studies represent in their specific aim a new departure, and, as we believe, a step forward. Readers who have followed our editorials for a year or two know that it is our conviction that the Sunday school should have a course of study as carefully graded and in all respects as intelligently constructed as any other school. In the construction of such a curriculum the religious aim and the educational character of the Sunday school should both alike be clearly recognized and provided for. Speaking from the educational point of view, the aim of such a curriculum, as a whole, should be to give to the student as thorough an understanding as possible of the history of divine revelation, in so far as this has been made through and is recorded in the Bible. It by no means follows that the whole of the curriculum should be historical, in the narrow sense of the term. But it is our conviction that it should include, and in a sense center about, a somewhat thorough course in biblical history, covering both the Old Testament and the New, dealing

with teachings as well as events, and recognizing relations of events as well as mere facts. Such a course might properly occupy the last three or four years of what is sometimes known as the secondary division of the school, or, in other words, the last years before the pupil passes into the adult division. To such a course all preceding work would, in a properly organized curriculum, lead up. Upon it the work of the adult division could be built, this course furnishing a broad and illuminating view of the entire history of biblical revelation, and thus preparing the way for the more detailed study of special periods of the history, portions of the literature, doctrines, or problems.

The production of text-books for such a curriculum as this, so different in its fundamental educational idea from those to which our Sunday schools have been accustomed, is a task that can be accomplished only by years of labor, and in which many minds must participate. It seems to us, however, that the time has come to begin this work, and that it can be best attacked at the point of which we have been speaking, the central portion of the curriculum, which is in large part determinative for all the rest. The studies in the life of Christ, the publication of which we begin with this number, form, in our thought, the middle third of the course in biblical history, properly following a thorough study of Old Testament history, and themselves to be followed by a study of the history of the apostolic age. It would, of course, be gratifying to us if they could be subjected to the test of somewhat wide use. The subject being the same as that of the International Lessons for the coming year, they might be employed in advanced classes alongside of the lessons of other series. To facilitate their use in classes, they have been, as is announced elsewhere, reprinted in pamphlet form. It is our intention that, as a rule, each monthly part shall cover sixteen pages.

And now, may we venture, in the spirit of our letter in the August number, to invite the coöperation of our readers in the production of these studies? The two members of our editorial staff who are specially engaged in the preparation of them are, as they have been for years, Sunday-school teachers. But they

desire the help of others engaged in like work. If any pastor or Sunday-school teacher will take the trouble, after reading or using the studies published in any issue or in each issue, to write to the editors a frank criticism of them, indicating in what particulars, if any, the work seems to them well done, and in what respects it is capable of improvement or is positively objectionable, these letters will be most gratefully received and their suggestions most carefully considered.

In continuance of our custom of recommending from time to time new works as they appear which are of such a character as to be helpful to all readers of the Bible, we wish to name in this issue Professor R. G. Moulton's *The Literary Study of the Bible*, of which a new and enlarged edition has just been published. A full statement of the title and a brief review of the book will be found below at page 74. The literary understanding and appreciation of the Bible have long been obscured under the assuredly more important religious and historical interests of the Scriptures. These interests should continue and increase, but there can be also along with them a revived recognition of the biblical writings as literature that will not only make the Bible more attractive, but will assist materially in creating a true conception of the Bible, without which it cannot be correctly understood or rightly used. Professor Moulton's book will be found, we think, to present the subject as it deserves to be presented.

The regular number of contributions and of departments in this issue is disturbed by the fact that twice the usual space is given to the "Constructive Studies." The normal arrangement will be restored next month.

We wish to extend cordial New Year's greetings to all our readers.

THE EDITORS.